

## Festival of First Fruits.

Traditionally at First Fruits Festival the **book of Ruth** is read.

Small groups will use the book of Ruth as a spring board to explore the following questions. YOU will also explore your gifts and first fruits, both individual and corporate. There will be a celebratory service of First Fruits on Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>. At this service we are all invited to bring our first fruit offerings, both financial and in the form of other gifts. Small group time will be used to explore what gifts along side our financial gifts we can use to give to God over this festival day and into the coming year.

Help initial discussion with these following questions and actions :

- get the group to think of wealth in all its forms, what are the things that we have that we take for granted...health, money, status, knowledge, skills, gifts, capabilities, wisdom, relationships, hospitality, ...
- often our wealth is something that we don't value ourselves because we don't know what it is to be poor, explore this in detail, take time, give feedback to one another about each other's wealth *see Ruth and Naomi as people who were poor and without a homeland.*
- once we have identified our wealth, in what ways *can we think of consciously 'spreading it around' by giving of our best*, ask God to help us be conscious of the ways in which we use it today, **ask God to help us identify 'where we could spread it around'**...lets avoid trying to answer the question ourselves, lets pray conscientiously as individuals and in groups for God to reveal His will.. *Listening prayer*
- what feels most natural? where do we feel **God is prompting us?** *Listening prayer*
- *how* do we feel He is leading us to spread it around? through our gifts: teaching, cooking, financial giving, singing etc.? through situations and opportunities? through relationships?
- if we were giving to Him in this context what would we give Him?
- **could we bring Him something to a service?** *everyone*, either as individuals or groups, seek God's will to understand more about where and how He wants us to give and to bring something as an offering to a service to underscore our understanding that He has led us to. Bring whatever it is that you have to that service that we can celebrate together
- let it be an *expression of the sheer breadth of giving of the best that is feasible from the huge variety of individuals and groups we have, let it be a commitment to God and a celebration of the church as we deepen our understanding of Him.*
- **pray /Ask** that God would provide us with the opportunities to go and practice what we have just learnt and the courage to follow through.

